

Abstract

Keywords: American culture, myth, archetype, romance, fairy tale

The purpose of this dissertation is to present the work of Horatio Alger, an American nineteenth-century writer, author of approximately 135 short novels, many of which feature the “rags to riches” motif, in the perspective of in-depth archetypal criticism. Horatio Alger, a character so far rather marginal in the literary world, according to the author, deserves more attention and a broader approach to his work taking into account its archetypal character. The author proposes a new look at Alger’s literary output with particular attention to elements of the archetype and myth, so far overlooked or analyzed superficially. The socioeconomic analysis of Alger’s novel, despite the undoubtedly important contribution, does not touch the essence of the issue. According to the author, the source of Alger’s extraordinary popularity is the archetypal verisimilitude of his works, which is an excellent excuse for an in-depth literary analysis of his works. The archetypal structure of romance is the warp and woof for Alger’s novels full of mythological motifs, such as the revival motif, archetype of a child, trixter, mysterious stranger, or extremely interesting archetypal city motif. The mythological and archetypal world created by Horatio Alger, resounding according to the author of this dissertation on the deep, often unconscious levels of the reader’s psyche, is the main strength of the popularity of the novel by the American writer. This dissertation is an attempt to deepen and broaden the critical analysis of the works of Horatio Alger and may contribute to making him a writer deservedly included in the canon of American popular literature.